

Tz'dakah in the Torah

7 If there is a needy person among you, one of your brethren, in any of your settlements in the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not harden your heart and shut your hand against your needy brother. 8 Rather, you must open your hand and lend him sufficient for whatever he needs.

10 Give to him readily and have no regrets when you do so, for in return the Lord your God will bless you in all your efforts and in all your undertakings. 11 For there will never cease to be needy ones in your land, which is why I command you: open your hand to the poor and needy kinsman in your land.

35 ...[Y]our brother, being in financial trouble...let him live by your side: 36 do not charge him advance or accrued interest, but fear your God. Let him live by your side as your brother. 37 Do not lend him your money at advance interest, or give him your food at accrued interest.

9 When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. 10 You shall not pick your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I the Lord am your God.

28 Every third year you shall bring out the full tithe of your yield of that year, but leave it within your settlements. 29 Then the Levite, who has no hereditary portion as you have, and the stranger, the afterless, and the widow in your settlements shall come and eat their fill...

18 You shall appoint judges and officials for your tribes, in all the settlements that the Lord your God is giving you, and they shall govern the people with due justice. 19 You shall not judge unfairly: you shall show no favorites; you shall not take bribes, for bribes blind the eyes of the wise and mask the words of the just. 20 Justice, justice shall you pursue, that you may thrive and occupy the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

דברים טו: ז
בְּאֶחָד שְׁעָרֶיךָ בְּאַרְצֶךָ אֲשֶׁר-ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ לֹא תִאָּמֵץ
אֶת-לִבְבְּךָ וְלֹא תִקְפֹּץ אֶת-יָדְךָ מֵאֶחָד הָאֲבִיּוֹן; ח כִּי-פָתַח
תִּפְתָּח אֶת-יָדְךָ לוֹ וְהָעֶבֶט תַּעֲבִיטְנוּ דִּי מִחֲסָרוֹ אֲשֶׁר יִחְסֹר לוֹ:

י נָתַן תַּתֵּן לוֹ וְלֹא-יָרַע לִבְבְּךָ בְּתַתֶּךָ לוֹ כִּי בְגִלָּל | הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה
יִבְרָכְךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-מַעֲשֶׂיךָ וּבְכָל מַשְׁלַח יָדְךָ: יא כִּי
לֹא-יִחָדֵל אֲבִיּוֹן מִקֶּרֶב הָאָרֶץ עַל-כֵּן אֲנִי מֻצָּו לֵאמֹר פָּתַח
תִּפְתָּח אֶת-יָדְךָ לְאֶחָד לְעַנְיֶיךָ וּלְאֲבִינֶךָ בְּאַרְצֶךָ:

ויקרא כה: לה
לֹא אֶל-תִּקְחָה מֵאֲתוֹ נֶשֶׁךְ וְתִרְבִּית וְיִרְאֵתָה מִן-הַיָּד וְחִי אֶחָד
עִמָּךְ: לו אֶת-כֶּסֶףךָ לֹא-תַתֵּן לוֹ בְּנֶשֶׁךְ וּבְמִרְבִּית לֹא-תַתֵּן
אִכְלָךְ:

ויקרא יט: ט
וּבִקְצֹרְכֶם אֶת-קִצְרֵי אֲרָצְכֶם לֹא
תִכְלֶה פֶּאֶת שְׂדֶךְ לִקְצֹר וּלְקַט קִצְרֶיךָ לֹא תִלְקֹט: י וְכִרְמְךָ לֹא
תַעֲזוֹל וּפְרִט כִּרְמְךָ לֹא תִלְקֹט לְעַנִּי וְלִגֵּר תַּעֲזוֹב אֹתָם אֲנִי ה'
אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

דברים יד: כח מִקְצֶה | שְׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים תוֹצִיא אֶת-כָּל-מַעֲשֶׂר
תְּבוּאָתְךָ בַּשָּׁנָה הַהִוא וְהִנַּחְתָּ בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ: כט וּבָא הַלֵּוִי כִּי אֵין-לוֹ
חֶלֶק וְנִחְלָה עִמָּךְ וְהִגֵּר וְהִיתוּם וְהִאֲלַמְנָה אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ וְאִכְלוּ
וְשָׂבְעוּ...

טזיח שְׁפָטִים וְשֹׁטְרִים תִּתֵּן לָךְ בְּכָל-שַׁעְרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ
נָתַן לָךְ לְשִׁבְטֶיךָ וְשִׁפְטוּ אֶת-הָעָם מִשְׁפַּט-צֶדֶק: יט לֹא-תִשָּׂא
מִשְׁפָּט לֹא תִכְיֹר פָּנִים וְלֹא-תִקַּח שֹׁחַד כִּי הַשֹּׁחַד יַעֲוֶר עֵינֵי
חֲכָמִים וְיִסְלֹף דְּבָרֵי צְדִיקִים: כ צֶדֶק צֶדֶק תִּרְדּוּף לְמַעַן תִּחְיֶה
וְיִרְשֶׁת אֶת-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ:

Text Questions:

- 1) We are not instructed to give “charity” to the poor or needy. What kind of “money” assistance are we required to provide instead?
- 2) What are the rules that the Torah provides regarding financial assistance of the needy in these texts?
- 3) What are the other types of assistance (not money) does the Torah command that we give?
- 4) What is the Hebrew word for charity that we use today? Does it appear in any of the texts on this page?
- 5) What is the connection between the word for charity and the concept of “justice,” which comes from the same Hebrew root word? What do we learn about giving charity from this relationship?